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A History of the Somers Mansion



ATLANTIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SOMERS POINT, N. J.

2.00

BY

HERBERT N. MOFFETT, A. I. A.

FORMER STATE SUPERVISOR

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
AND ARCHITECT FOR THE RESTORATION**

AND

LEWIS D. COOK, B. SC. IN ARCH.

FORMER HISTORIAN

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY



26TH OF 9TH MONTH 1942



OWNER:

The State of New Jersey under jurisdiction of the Commission on Historic Sites.

CUSTODIAN:

The Atlantic County Historical Society.

DATE OF ERECTION:

1720-1730; with rear annex 1730-1760. Alterations about 1860, including two-story front and side porches and two-story frame addition over rear stone annex as replacement after damage by fire.

BUILDER:

Richard Somers (1693-1760), original owner.

SOMERS MANSION

HISTORICAL DATA—The identification of this house by search of its title in the County, Province and other available records has been undertaken in order to establish the facts pertinent to its successive ownership. The transfers of the property are numbered consecutively.

(I) By deed of 30 November, 1695, Thomas Budd, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, "Merchant," conveyed to John Somers of the Province of West New Jersey, "Husbandman," for 240 Pounds, three large tracts of land on Great Egg Harbor, Gloucester County, New Jersey, viz. (A) "A certain piece of land lying and being on the Sound on the northeast side of Great Egg Harbor, being bounded on the northeast side by a line of James Steelman's land, on the northwest by Patconck Creek, on the southwest by the Bay of Great Egg Harbor, and on the southeast by the Sound, within which bounds are contained 1500 acres." (B) "Also another parcel of land lying and being between the mouth of Patconck Creek and the mouth of Bass River in the province of West New Jersey," bounded north by a branch of Patconck Creek and south by the Bay, containing 800 acres. (C) "Another piece lying and being on the Sound side of Great Egg Harbor, containing 672 acres together with 250 acres of Robert Turner, which 672 acres together with 28 acres of land adjoining to the cedar swamp makes a complement of 700 acres of land." "Together with all the Isles, Islands, mines, minerals," etc. Recital is made that the said 3000 acres being one-half of certain proprietaries formerly granted by Edward Bylling and his trustees to John Hind of London and afterwards assigned to John Brown and Thomas Sands of London by certain commissioners appointed by a Commission of Bankruptcy awarded under the Great Seal of England against said John Hinds by indenture of 16 May, 1687, and that the said half part became vested by several conveyances in James Wass of London, and that said Wass by his deed of 5 February, 1689, conveyed the same to Thomas Budd, first above named grantor hereof, and that a warrant of survey of said 3000 acres for said Budd was granted by (the Surveyor-General) John Reading on 4 October, 1695, and that it was accordingly laid out and surveyed by John Worledge on 9 October, 1695. (Recorded in Gloucester County Deed Book No. 3, page 52, now filed in office of Secretary of State.)

By deed of 23 March, 1695-96, John Somers of Great Egg Harbor, Gloucester County, Esquire, conveyed to James Steelman of same place, yeoman, 100 acres there, bounded southwest by land of grantee, being part of the 1500 acre tract bought by said Somers of Thomas Budd by deed of 30 November, 1695. (Gloucester County Deed Book No. 3, page 194, cited above).

And, by deed of the "Twentieth day of ye first month called March," 1718, John Somers of Great Egg Harbor conveyed to his son James Somers "In consideration of the naturall Love he bareth unto his said son James Somers and also for and towards his settlement and advancement in the World, together with the sum of five shillings lawful silver moneys of America," a 350 acre tract in Great Egg Harbor Township, Gloucester

County, bounded thus:—"Having on the southeast the Sound, on the northwest the creek called Patconck, and on ye southwest by the land and plantation of John Somers, it being part of some land I purchased of Thomas Budd as by deed of him to me bearing date the thirtieth day of November, anno domine 1695."

GENEALOGICAL NOTES ON JOHN SOMERS

John Somers, first of this family to settle in Great Egg Harbor Township, Gloucester County, New Jersey, is said to have been born in 1640 in Worcestershire, England, and to have come to Pennsylvania in 1681-82, and to have settled in Upper Dublin Township, in the northern part (now Montgomery County) of Philadelphia County. In the minutes of the Abington Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), held at John Hart's house on the 2nd of 12th month, 1683/84, it is stated that John "Summers" and Anna Hodgkins "both belonging to this meeting" declared their intentions of marriage. In the minutes of the same monthly meeting of 2nd of 1st month, 1684, occur these words: "Whereas John Sumers and Susannah Hodgskins haveing declared their intentions of marriage with each other before two Monthly Meetings, Enquiry being made by persons appointed and found clear from all others on ye account of marriage, did accomplish their marriage in ye Unity of Friends as is signified by their Marriage Certificate."

The records of the "Births of John & Hannah Somers Children" from 1685 to 1691 inclusive appear in the records of the said Abington Monthly Meeting thus: Milecent Somers born 7th of 10th month 1685; John Somers Jur. born 5th of 7 month 1687; Hannah Somers born 21st of 1st Month 1691. From this and the following item it is evident that John Somers and his family removed from within the bounds of Abington Monthly Meeting across New Jersey to Great Egg Harbor in 1691-1693. For, the records of Great Egg Harbor-Cape May Monthly Meeting of Friends contain the record of the birth of Richard Somers on 3rd of 1st month 1693, as also of James Somers "son of John Somers from England" on 15th of 1st month 1695.

John Somers was appointed supervisor of roads and a constable at the first meeting of the court at Portsmouth, Cape May County, held on 20 March 1693; appointed a justice of the peace 1695-1714, assessor for Egg Harbor Township 1708; elected a member of the Province Assembly 1709 (a); is said to have died in 1723 and to have been buried in the family cemetery on his estate, near the present golf course. The location of his house appears to be unknown at present. He devised his "home land" to his eldest son Richard by will in 1721; possibly his house was superseded by the one here considered, built by the son about 1720-30, the site being prominent and near the ferry which the father operated officially from 1693.

Thus, by Act of the Legislature in 1693, the justices of Cape May County were authorized to appoint a person to "erect and set up a ferry at the said Great Egg Harbour" who "shall and may exact for the passage

(a) Register of the New Jersey Society, Colonial Dames of America, 1928.

of every single person twelve pence per head, and for sheep and hogs four pence per head, and for all manner of grain two pence per bushel." Accordingly, as stated in the minutes of 2nd of 10th month 1695, "The Grand Jury for the County of Gloucester doe appoyntt and make Choyce of John Somers to keep a Ferry over Great Egg Harbour for man, hors & Kattle; to pass to Cape May & from Cape May to Eastt Jarsy and other parts as passengers may have occasion. Signed in the behalf of the Grand Jury by ouer foreman, at ye price already fixed by ye assembly. Thomas Thackera."

The Children of John and Hannah (Hodgkins) Somers were:

- a. Millicent, born 7 of 10 mo. 1685, Upper Dublin Twp., Phila. Co., Pa.;
d. 20 of 9 mo. 1762, mar. Richard Townsend of Cape May Co., N. J.
- b. John Somers Jr., b. 5 of 7 mo. 1687; not named in father's will dated
8 Jan. 1720/21; prob. d. young.
- c. Hannah Somers, b. 21 of 1st mo. 1691; d. 24 of 2 mo. 1737, Grt. Egg
Harbor; mar. 1st, Joseph Dole who d. 1727, and 2nd, Benjamin
Ingersol.
- d. Richard Somers, b. 1st of 3 mo. 1693, Grt. Egg Harbor; d. 27 of 11
mo. 1760; of whom further.
- e. James Somers, b. 15 of 1st mo. 1695, Grt. Egg Harbor; d. 22 of 2 mo.
1761 there; mar. Abigail Adams.
- f. Samuel Somers, b. ; d. 1761-68; mar. Mary Leeds.
- g. Job Somers, b. ; d. 1744; mar. 1732 Eunice Creeseey.
- h. Isaac Somers, named in father's will 1720/21.
- i. Edmund Somers, b. 1702; d. 1743; mar. 1730 Mary Steelman.
- j. Bridget Somers, named in father's will 1720/21.

(2) Will of John Somers of Great Egg Harbor, Gloucester County, N. J., yoeman, dated 8 January 1720/21, proved 14 January 1739; makes provision for wife Hannah; appoints son Richard as the executor and devises to him the "home land" excepting 400 acres on the east side thereof, he to pay ten pounds annually to his mother; to son James 350 acres on the northeast side of Mulberry Point where he now lives; to sons Samuel and Job equally 800 acres on the northwest side of Patconck Creek; to son Isaac 400 acres at Gilbert's Pond, over the head of the mill creek; to son Edmund 350 acres on the southwest side of his brother James; the sons Samuel, Job, Isaac, and Edmond to pay ten shillings annually to their sister Bridget after the decease of their mother; the remainder of the estate to be divided equally among testator's three daughters. (Recorded in Will Book No. 4, page 126, now filed in the office of Secretary of State. Abstract published in N. J. Archives XXX, 447).

The will of Hannah Somers (widow of John), of Great Egg Harbor, Gloucester County, N. J., dated 12 October 1737, proved 24 February, 1737/38; names her sons Richard, to whom a bible, James, Samuel, Job, and Edmund, daughter Millicent Townsend, and grandchildren viz. the children of Hannah Ingersoll deceased, and Hannah, daughter of James Somers; and appointed son Richard Somers as executor. (Abstract of Will published in N. J. Archives XXX, 447).

RICHARD SOMERS 1693-1760.

Having come into possession of his father's "home land" on Great Egg Harbor, as eldest son and devisee, Richard Somers remained in possession thereof until his death on 27th of 11th month, 1760, leaving a will. He is said to have erected the brick portion of the house here considered, on the paternal home land. (b)

(b) "Richard Somers . . . burned the brick and built at Somers Point the old Somers Mansion which is still standing." (Hubert Somers, Somers Family, pages 433-38 in *The Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County*, 1900). "The old Somers homestead at Somers Point, overlooking Great Egg Harbor Bay . . . was erected about 1730 by the first Richard Somers." (A. M. Heston, *South Jersey, A History*, 1924, vol. 2, page 180).

FRIENDS MEETINGS AT THE HOUSE OF RICHARD SOMERS 1726

"The Quakers established meeting houses at various places along the coast. The first of these meetings was begun about 1695 at Somers Point, and among the members were John Somers, Jonathan Adams, John Scull, Jonas Valentine, and Peter Conover, mostly whalemens from Long Island. The oldest preserved records show that in 1726 a monthly meeting was held alternately at the house of Richard Somers on the Egg Harbor side and at the house of Rebecca Garretson on the Cape May side of the Great Egg Harbor. First-day and week-day meetings were also held at these houses." (A. M. Heston, *South Jersey, A History*, 1924, page 143.)

THE SHORE ROAD FROM NACOTE CREEK TO RICHARD SOMERS' HOUSE 1731

On 15 March 1731, the committee of six surveyors of the highways for Burlington County and as many for Gloucester County signed their report of their resurvey of the Nacote Creek Trail, now known as the Shore Road, reciting that "forasmuch as there hath been a Road formerly laid out for the Inhabitants of the Township of Egg Harbour in the County of Gloucester to Travel from the east end of Sumers Ferry, and whereas the said Road then laid out is since found inconvenient for the said Inhabitants by Reason of the Swamps and Marsh which the said Road passeth through, so that the said Inhabitants have been necessitated to make application for an Alteration of the Road," and describing the road as relocated to be as follows:—"Beginning at Naked Creek, and from thence as the same was formerly laid out and now beat to Jeremiah Adams' Bridge, thence over the same and so on as the road is now beat till it comes near William Read's house, thence by a line of marked trees on the northwest side of the said road till it comes past the said Read's house, thence along the beaten road till it comes to John Steelman's land, thence by a line of marked trees on the north west side of the beaten road till it comes near across the said Steelman's land, thence along the said beaten road to Absecon Bridge, thence over the same and so along the beaten road till it comes near Jeremiah Risley's house, thencely a line of new marked trees on the north west side of the beaten road, part over Daniel Lake's land and part over the said Risley's land, and so into the

beaten road again, and so along the same till it comes to Abel Scull's land, thence crossing the said Scull's land by a line of marked trees till it comes near David Covenhoven's house, and from thence along the road as it now lyeth to the landing near Richard Summers' house." (Gloucester Co. Road Book.)

(3) The will of Richard Somers of Great Egg Harbor, Gloucester County, N. J., dated 8th of 2nd month 1752 and proved 15 April 1761, contains these items viz.

—"I give to my beloved wife Judith the use of one half of my plantation, that is to say, one half of the thousand acres which my father left me, as long as she remains my widow, which land is on the north-east side, together with my dwelling house and a barn."

—"I give to my son John Somers the one half of the plantation whereon I live, which is the southwest side of said plantation, with the islands and flats and water land adjoining the same, which appears by drafts and surveys to be about 120 acres, and half the right that is in the islands below the house, between that and the east end of the beach, which appears by survey to be 200 acres more, and a right to 70 acres of marsh in my right at Tockhow marsh, all the above lands to John Somers."

—"I give to my son Richard Somers all the land and marsh that lies adjoining to James Steelman's land, bounded as follows:—Beginning near the mouth of a thorofare called Lousey Harbor, so as to bring a small ditch to bear in a cove formerly called Gilford's Pond about north 62 degrees west, and from thence to an oak tree marked with five notches, a little above the ditch in the field, from thence near north 60 degrees west along the ridge on the north side of the new field to the north corner of the field, thence by a straight course to the uppermost fork of a creek called Mill Creek, along the same by the several courses thereof to the mouth, then up the several courses of Patconck Creek to James Steelman's land and along by said Steelman's land to the Sound, then along the same to the place of beginning. And all the rights that I took up, between which three surveys on the north side of the channel of Great Egg Harbor, in a lot containing 426 acres, and half my right on Peck's Beach, and 150 acres of marsh in my right at Tockahoue meadow, to Richard Somers." (*)

(*) Photo of "Col. Richard Somers' Mansion at Somers' Point" appears with biographical account of his son, the Master Commandant Richard Somers USN, 1778-1804, on page 504 of the Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County, 1900. The site has since been marked.

—"I give to my son James Somers all that land which I have that lies joyning to a place called Grederes Neck, which was taken up at five surveys, with 13 acres of marsh at Cedar Hammocks, which the draft will make appear to be 1200 acres, with 200 acres of marsh at or in my right in Tuckahow meadows. Also another tract of marsh and flat lands and waters lying on the south side of Great Egg Harbor Bay, called Garrett's Island, containing 138 acres, to James Somers."

—"I give to my son Joseph Somers all the lands which I purchased of John Price by deed of 25 December 1749, situate on South River, in

two surveys, and one on Mierry Run, with my old Cedar Swamp and the 67 acres of other land and 200 acres of marsh in my right at Middle River, and 72 acres on the northernmost of Garrits island.”

—“And I order that if any of my sons should die before they arrive at 21 years, that his land shall fall to Edmund Somers, their younger brother, if still living, and monies ordered to be paid to him shall cease to be paid, and if any of them dye before they come to the age to possess their land, the said lands shall be equally divided among the remaining brothers.” (Abstract from the original Will. Copy of will is recorded in Will Book No. 10, p. 379, in office of Secretary of State.)

Richard Somers Sr., the testator above named and builder of the house here considered, was born 1st of 3rd month, 1693, at Somers Point, Great Egg Harbor Township, Gloucester County, N. J., fourth child and eldest surviving son of John and Hannah (Hodgkins) Somers, and died there 27th of 11th month 1760, having married in 1727 Judith Letart, born 26th of 3rd month 1712, who died 9th of 7th month 1761, and had issue, viz.

- a. John Somers, b. 14 of 10 mo. 1727, d. 28 of 8 mo. 1799, m. 2ndly Hannah Spicer Ludlam.
- b. Sarah Somers, b. 21 of 7 mo. 1729, d. 26 of 5 mo. 1783, m. James Somers.
- c. Judith Somers, b. 5 of 6 mo. 1731, m. Samuel Risley.
- d. Elizabeth Somers, b. 4 of 7 mo. 1733, mar. Mr. Paul ?
- e. Hannah Somers, b. 22 of 12 mo. 1735/36, m. Peter Andrews.
- f. Richard Somers, b. 24 of 11 mo. 1737, d. 22 Oct. 1794, m. 3 Dec. 1761 Sophia Stillwell.
- g. James Somers, b. 7 of 2 mo. 1739.
- h. Millicent Somers, b. 12 of 4 mo. 1741.
- i. Joseph Somers, b. 4 of 5 mo. 1743.
- j. Edmund Somers, b. 20 of 5 mo. 1745.

(The above data is from the records of Great Egg Harbor-Cape May Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, copy in collections of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania).

JOHN SOMERS (1727-1799)

John Somers of the third generation, born 14th of 10th month, 1727, at Somers Point, eldest of the ten children of Richard Somers, Sr., and his wife Judith Letart Somers, received the southwestern half of the paternal plantation there by the devise in his father's will and came into possession of the latter's house upon the death of his mother in 1761. He owned and occupied it at the time of his death, 28th of 8th month, 1799. (c)

(c) John Somers, b. 14 of 10 mo. 1727, d. 28 of 8 mo. 1799, mar. 2nd, Hannah Spicer Ludlam, b. 3 Sept. 1735, d. 11 Nov. 1800, and occupied the old brick mansion at Somers Point and owned with (his brother) Col. Richard Somers the Point property and Peck's Beach, where Ocean City now stands. (The Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County).

(4) The will of John Somers Sr., of Great Egg Harbor, Gloucester County, N. J., dated 20 June, 1799, and proved 17 September following, is transcribed thus:

I give and bequeath unto my beloved wife Hannah Somers all the beds and beddings I had with her and every other thing that was her property that I now have in possession, and it is further my will that she should have the bed room and privilege in the kitchen during her natural life. I give her also the new square mahogany table, a looking glass with mahogany frame, and the use of the bond I have against Christopher Ludlam, and to my daughter Deborah Somers, to be equally divided between the two, all of which I give in lieu of her dowry.

I give to my son John Somers that plantation whereon he now lives, that I bought of John Shaw, also 21 acres of meadow in my right at Tukehoa, to him, also one-third part of the swamp that was called my father's, to him his heirs and assigns forever.

I give to my son James Somers that tract of land and meadow called Hickory Point and bounded as follows: Beginning at Fresh Spring Creek that puts out of Cedar Swamp Creek, thence up the several courses of the said creek to the head, where the line fence joins the creek, thence east and southeasterly by the several courses of the line fence across the neck, as the fence stands, to the bars, thence by a straight line from the fence by the bars to a Red Cedar post near the old field, and from the said cedar post by a direct course till it strikes the stake fence near the head of Brick Kiln Creek, thence down the several courses of said creek to the mouth, thence, including all the survey made by my father on the islands and flats adjoining Hickory Point, to the mouth of Cedar Swamp Creek, binding the said creek the several courses thereof to the place of beginning. Also I give to my son James one equal half part of my right in Peck's Beach and one equal half part of my meadows at Tuckehoa, exclusive of my son John's 20 acres, and one-third part of the old Cedar Swamp that belonged to my father, and one-half of the cedar swamp that I bought of the Townsends, to him his heirs and assigns forever.

I give and bequeath to my son Jesse Somers the plantation whereon I now live, and all the land between Richard Somers' line or plantation and the line or plantation I gave to my son James, binding the Bay or Sound on the front and Cedar Swamp Creek at the back and the line stipulated between him and his brothers James and Richard Somers plantation aforesaid, with all the buildings thereon. Also I give him Ledge Islands between my dwelling house and Peck's Beach, and half my meadows at Tuckehoa, exclusive of my son John's 20 acres. Likewise I give him an island by the name of Garrett's Island, also one-half of a cedar swamp I bought of the Townsends and one-third part of the old cedar swamp that belonged to my father, also a survey lying between Rebeck Bay on Bonds Bar and the island below toward the beach that John Golden can shew the bounds, computed at 300 acres, be the same more or less, to him his heirs and assigns forever. It is my further will that Jesse Somers

pays my son John ten pounds and that my son Jesse pay my wife yearly and every year the sum of five pounds to maintain her as long as she remains my widow.

I give to my son Joseph Somers my two tracts of land at South River, containing 500 acres, where Elijah Townsend now lives, also three tracts of meadow:—one tract called the Island, computed at 20 acres, lying on Gibson's Creek, the other tract lying on the main river, containing 25 acres, and the other is a lot of fresh meadow within the bank that I bought of John Week, computed at 12 acres. I give this on condition that if my son Joseph delivers up to me the one-half of the Sloop that I gave him, and if he should deliver her as above recited I give the above bequest to him, his heirs and assigns forever.

Lastly, I give to my three daughters, Rachel Smith, Elizabeth Wescoat and Abigail Scull, all my moveable estate to be equally divided between them, their heirs and assigns forever. I also make, constitute and appoint my two sons, James and Jesse Somers, executors to my last will and testament, disannulling all other wills by me made, ratifying and confirming this my last will and no other. In witness whereof I have set my hand and seal the day and year above written, 1799. (Recorded in Will Book No. 38, page 372, in office of Secretary of State).

John Somers, the testator above named, was Collector of Taxes for Egg Harbor Township, and as such is of record as turning in to the County Treasurer the sum of 45 pounds 17 shillings 6 pence in 1755. The children of this John Somers were:—

- a. John Somers, b. 9 Apr. 1760, d. 26 Mar. 1824, m. 1st. Mary Steelman, 2nd. Hannah Garwood.
- b. James Somers, m. 1st Lettice Finley, 2nd Aner Blackman, 3rd Martha Wiley.
- c. Jesse Somers, b. 4 Oct. 1763, d. 29 Jan. 1858.
- d. Richard Somers, lost at sea.
- e. Frank Somers, lost at sea.
- f. Judith Somers, mar. David Scull.
- g. Rachel Somers, mar. Smith.
- h. Elizabeth Somers, mar. Wescott.
- i. Joseph Somers, d. of yellow fever.
- j. Abigail Somers, mar. Scull.

(The above data is from Mr. Hubert Somers' pedigree of the family of Somers of Somers Point, published in *The Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County*, 1900, pp. 433-438, but compared with the children as named in the will above.)

JESSE SOMERS 1763-1858

Jesse Somers, of the fourth generation, born 4 October 1763, was named as devisee of the paternal homestead, here considered, in the will of his father, John Somers, above quoted, and he remained in possession

thereof at the time of his death, 29 January 1858, leaving a will. He married first Deborah Ludlam, born 4 April 1775, who died 18 September 1835, and second Elizabeth Baker who died 16 September 1848 aged 45-7-19.

A survey of the Shore Road from Somers Point to Absecon Bridge, dated 22 May 1805, appears on record thus:—"Beginning at low water mark, a small distance from Jesse Somers' wharf, thence north 41 degrees west 8.12 chains to a stake near said Somers' house, thence north 25 degrees 30 minutes east 43.50 chains to a stake, thence north 33 degrees 50 minutes east 258.50 chains to a stake near the Friends Upper Meeting House, thence north 45 degrees 25 minutes east 180 chains to a stake by a cedar tree near Samuel Smith's upper place, thence north 36 degrees 30 minutes east 198 chains to a stake, thence north 8 degrees east 19.20 chains to a stake, the westerly side of Absecon Bridge." (Gloucester County Road Book BB, page 19.)

The children of Jesse Somers were:—

- a. Priscilla Somers mar. Elton Braddock.
- b. John Somers mar. _____, and had two children.
- c. Reuben Somers mar. Mary Blank and had sons Reuben and Jesse.
- d. Hannah Somers mar. 1st James Scull, 2nd Humphrey Scull.
- e. William Somers.
- f. Priscilla Ann Somers.
- g. Jesse Somers Jr., mar. Mary Baker.
- h. Richard L. Somers, b. 17 Dec. 1809, d. 6 Apr. 1871, mar. 1st Hannah Somers, b. 9 Jan. 1807, d. 16 Dec. 1835, mar. 2nd Annie Braddock, b. 1 May 1813, d. 27 May 1892. By 1st mar. he had issue: Deborah Jane who mar. George Anderson and Christopher lost at sea 15 Sept. 1858 aged 23. By 2nd mar. he had issue: William B. b. Jan. 1839, d. 24 Aug. 1839; Dr. Job B. b. 17 June 1840, d. 8 Apr. 1895; Richard B.; Annie b. 16 Mar. 1846, d. 15 Nov. 1874, mar. Adolph Kapella of Phila, and had son A. Somers Kapella; Braddock, b. 13 Sept. 1858; and Hannah S. mar. George Hayday Jr. and had daughters Florence and Louisa.

(The above data is from Mr. Hubert Somers' pedigree of the family of Somers of Somers Point, published in *The Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County*, 1900, pages 433-438.)

(5) By deed of 10 January 1820, Jesse Somers Esq. conveyed to (his sons) John, Reuben L., William K., Richard and Jesse Somers, "All the following described tracts of land: Beginning and extending the several courses according to the last will and testament of my father John Somers, dated 10 June 1799:—My plantation upon which I dwell, containing all my land between Richard Somers, deceased, line, now Sarah Keen's line, containing 600 acres more or less, which I claim title to by the afore-said devise of my father, John Somers, deceased." (Gloucester County Deed Book No. 11, p. 226.)

(6) Deed dated 18 December 1828:—Reuben L., Richard and Jesse Somers Jr. convey to Jesse Somers Sr., "All the following described tracts

of land situate in the township of Egg Harbor, County of Gloucester, bounded as follows:—Beginning at the several beginnings and extending the several courses according to the records of same pursuant to the last will and testament of John Somers, deceased, father to the party of the second part, and according to a deed made from Jesse Somers Sr., to the parties of the first part, dated 10 January 1820. The first is the Homestead Plantation whereon the party of the second part now lives." etc. etc. (Gloucester County Deed Book C3, page 342.)

(7) The will of Jesse Somers Sr., dated 15 June 1853 and proved 9 February 1858, ordered his estate divided into six parts and paid to his son Richard L. Somers. (Atlantic Co. Will Book A., page 212.)

(8) In the division of the real estate of Richard L. Somers, deceased, the homestead tract was assigned to the widow, Anna R. Somers, as her dower right, by the commissioners appointed, per their report dated 10 September 1872. (Atlantic Co. Book A. of Divisions of Lands, page 368.)

(9) By deed of 1st January 1893, Adolph F. Kapella, executor of the estate of Anna R. Somers, widow of Richard L. Somers, conveyed to Job B. Somers in trust the tract last above mentioned. (Atlantic Co. Deed Book No. 92, page 318.)

(10) By deed of 13 December 1894, Job B. Somers, trustee abovesaid, conveyed the same property to Adolph Somers Kappella. (Atlantic Co. Deed Book No. 188, page 60.)

(11) By deed of 13 December 1894, same as above, Adolph Somers Kappella conveyed the same property back to Adolph F. Kappella. (Atlantic Co. Deed Book No. 188, page 64.)

(12) By deed of 31 August 1899, Adolph F. Kappella conveyed the same property to Hannah Somers Hayday. (Atlantic Co. Deed Book No. 241, page 246.)

(13) By deed of 8 April 1937, the trustees of the heirs of Hannah Somers Hayday conveyed to The Atlantic County Historical Society, "All that certain tract of land and premises situated in the city of Somers Point, Atlantic County, N. J., bounded as follows:—Beginning in the center of Main Avenue where the north line of Broadway intersects the center line of Main Avenue, thence (1) South 82 degrees 47 minutes west 81.5 feet to a red cedar stake set for the southeast corner of Richard B. Somers' lot on the north line of Broadway, thence (2) north 7 degrees 13 minutes west in R. B. Somers' line and in the line of Florence S. Scull and Lucien B. C. Somers 284 feet to the original line of Hannah S. Hayday, late Somers, as set off to her in the division of the real estate of Richard L. Somers; thence (3) south 54 degrees east 239.5 feet in the said old line to the center of Main Avenue; thence (4) south 30 degrees 47 minutes west 152 feet to the place of beginning, containing one and one-third acres, it being the homestead of Richard L. Somers, deceased, and being part of a tract of 322 acres which passed by deeds as follows", reciting Deed Books 241, 188 and 92 above abstracted. (Atlantic County Deed Book No. 1066, page 429.)

L. D. C.

·DEPARTMENT·OF·THE·INTERIOR·

·WASHINGTON·D·C·

·THIS·IS·TO·CERTIFY·THAT·THE·

·HISTORIC·BUILDING·

·KNOWN·AS·

The Somers Mansion

SOMERS POINT

·IN·THE·COUNTY·OF·

Atlantic

·AND·THE·STATE·OF·

New Jersey

·HAS·BEEN·SELECTED·BY·THE·

·ADVISORY·COMMITTEE·OF·THE·

·HISTORIC·AMERICAN·

·BUILDINGS·SURVEY·

·AS·POSSESSING·EXCEPTIONAL·

·HISTORIC·OR·ARCHITECTURAL·

·INTEREST·AND·AS·BEING·WORTHY·

·OF·MOST·CAREFUL·PRESERVATION·

·FOR·THE·BENEFIT·OF·FUTURE·

·GENERATIONS·AND·THAT·TO·THIS·

·END·A·RECORD·OF·ITS·PRESENT·

·APPEARANCE·AND·CONDITION·

·HAS·BEEN·MADE·AND·DEPOSITED·

·FOR·PERMANENT·REFERENCE·IN·THE·

·LIBRARY·OF·CONGRESS·

·ATTEST·

Seymour Williams

·District·Officer·



Harold G. Scher

Secretary of the Interior

THE RESTORATION

In 1937, as shown by the preceding abstract of title, there was placed on record with the Clerk of the County of Atlantic a deed from the heirs of Hannah Somers Hayday conveying to the Atlantic County Historical Society title to the property known as the Somers Mansion on Shore Road, Somers Point, New Jersey. This date marks the first transfer outside of the Somers family of the title of this property which was acquired by John Somers in 1695 as a part of a tract of 3000 acres.

1937 also marks the beginning of an effort to effect the realization of Mrs. Hayday often expressed wish that this property should be preserved as a memorial to the Somers family.

On October 8th, 1941 a deed was recorded transferring the property from the Society to The Commission on Historic Sites, an agency of the State of New Jersey, having jurisdiction over sixteen houses and monuments as well as being responsible for the placing of the many (138 now in place) historic site markers along our highways.

In order to accomplish the restoration of the mansion the Society made arrangements with the Commission to have the work executed by mechanics and labor supplied by the Works Projects Administration and agreed to supply the funds for the State's contribution, thus sharing the sponsoring of the Project. The Commission had the work of the Historic American Buildings Survey to use as a guide. This latter group was a unit of the Works Projects Administration and was organized by the American Institute of Architects, the National Park Service, and the Library of Congress, and sponsored by the New Jersey State Library. The Historic American Buildings Survey had made drawings and had taken photographs of the Somers Mansion in 1936. These documents were of great aid.

Several items of remarkable interest architecturally were discovered before and during removal of construction which largely concealed the original house. The stones of the rear annex and the foundation of the Mansion appear not to be of local origin and were classified by the New Jersey State Geologist as various granite and sand stone boulders which can be found on the shores of the Delaware River, from Penns Neck northward to the Falls of the Delaware (Trenton).

Flemish-bond brickwork, identical to that of the front, was revealed in the gable end when the stucco was removed. Incidentally, no brick header insertions in the latter to form initials or date (as in contemporary houses in Salem and Burlington Counties) were disclosed. A stone tablet inscribed "Somers Mansion," high up in the apex of this end wall, appears to be of a later date than the house. The flemish-bond brickwork (bricks alternating red stretcher and black or blue headers) on the front end east walls has been carefully re-pointed. The other walls, which were of common bond, including the one-story stone annex have been re-stuccoed. The part of the brick chimney in the west gable end wall above the roof was found to be of bricks smaller than those used elsewhere in the building and were obviously a replacement of the original. The chimney has been

rebuilt following the design of the John Rogers House, built in 1718 near Springside, Burlington County. The brickwork of this house, recently destroyed by fire, was quite similar to that of Somers Mansion.

Two windows in the east gable end of the main house, first and second floors, were determined to have been of later insertion and have accordingly been removed and the openings blocked up with original brick found on the premises. All the windows contained two-light sash which had replaced the originals, have been removed and sixteen and twenty lights to the window inserted as proper to the period.

No evidence of hardware for shutters to the windows was found. The detail of the wood frames appears to preclude such features, rather strangely, and it is presumed that none existed.

Due to settlement of the house, underpinnings were required under the entire foundation and concrete piers were erected at each side of the chimney in the cellar. This settlement had been caused by the excavation of the cellar some eight inches deeper than originally planned.

The great fireplace on the first floor was restored by removing brickwork which had been inserted to reduce the original 8-foot opening to 4 feet. By removing more brickwork in the back of the fireplace the herring-bone pattern brick fireback was revealed. (This detail appears likewise in the rear of the fireplaces in the Trent House, erected in 1715 in Trenton; in Pomona Hall, 1726, at Camden; and in the Hancock House, 1734, below Salem). The original 12 by 13 inch hewn oak timber, exposed by the removal of the mantelpiece which had been installed when the fireplace was altered, spans the fireplace as now restored. The fireplace of the second floor required only minor repairs and restoration of part of the herring-bone fireback. It is practically all in its original condition. Into the unusually complicated assemblage of chimney flues that pass from the first floor fireplace behind the one on the second floor, (this construction is also found in the John Rogers House) instead of at one side as they are usually found, was combined a new flue for the modern heating plant in the rear annex.

Removal of the two-story porch from the front and east end of the house revealed that, as was also evident on the rear of the house, the butts of the floor beams of the second story projected through the brickwork and had been sawed off close to the wall. That these had formerly projected beyond the wall to carry a balcony around these three sides of the house was obvious from the existing original front and rear doorways at the level of the second floor and also from the unique design of the overhanging roof. The projecting beams to carry the balcony have been carefully restored by extensions spliced into the old butts.

The construction of the framework supporting the roof of Somers Mansion is very unusual. The deck roof is supported by three-inch hewn timbers which taper from a width of seven inches at the ridge to one of three at the heels where they are pinned to the timbers supporting the more steeply sloping part of the roof. The remarkable roof truss thus formed is possibly an example of ship-wright's work. The ends of this roof

truss bear on the ends of the beams of the garret floor which extend some three feet through and beyond the face of the brick walls. This overhanging roof thus formed a cover for the second story balcony. (Only in Dutch Colonial houses in northeastern New Jersey are similarly widespread eaves to be found, in houses of the same and earlier date, but in those cases they serve only to protect the clay-mortar used in the stone walls of the one-story farmhouses from the rain and sleet). The two front dormer windows were removed in the restoration as being of later insertion. Some evidence was found of a former dormer, nearer the center of the front roof. Possibly there was also one also in the rear, but no certain evidence was found to substantiate the existence of either.

Especially notable are the original roofing boards discovered when the modern tin roofing was removed from the rear slope of the gambrel roof. These are $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches thick, 8 to 10 inches wide, of Jersey yellow pine of a kind long since extinct in this part of the state. The fact that within $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch of the edges of each upper face is a full-length groove $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide, evidently to protect these straight jointed boards from leaking, and their weather beaten condition suggests that they originally were exposed to the elements. The entire roof has been covered with a "Williamsburg type" asbestos reproduction of old hand-split shingles.

The remaining portions of a one inch partition in the first story, still retaining marks of two former passage doors, indicated the existence of two rooms approximately nine by ten feet in size at the end opposite the great fireplace. These portions of board have been removed to form one large reception room.

The one-story stone masonry annex in the rear is difficult to analyze. That it was an addition to the brick house is clearly evident from the fact that the dividing wall is indeed the brick wall of the main house and was originally exposed to view. For the molded brick "Water-table" extends along it as well as along the other walls, and a window with its original wood frame intact (glass sash missing) was discovered, plastered over, at each side of the door connecting the annex and the main house, and have now been restored to view from the inside of the original house. Having no indication of the original design of the roof or of the superstructure of the one-story rear annex to guide restoration, and no similar one being known to exist, it has been covered with a modern flat roof as being most expedient under the circumstances.

The precedent for such kitchen annexes is for them to be located at one end of the main house, but at Somers Mansion the end walls appear to have been unbroken by any former door and it seems evident that none existed. It is, therefore, to be assumed that a detached kitchen was located near-by, as in other properties of the same period of erection throughout the state.

Under the floor of the present kitchen annex and heater room, along the western wall, were uncovered the foundations of a fireplace and oven, the latter feature having extended outside the wall. This fireplace was 11 feet wide and 3 feet deep. In the east wall of the annex was a later fire-

place, not a part of the original construction, as proved by the discovery of wall-paper of the middle nineteenth century back of its brickwork. This fireplace has now been removed.

Other details of interest are the heart-shaped perforations forming a wooden vent to the stairway and to the closet in the second story. (Such features were found in Salem and Camden County houses. The Pledger House in Mannington Township, built in 1728, has one such heart with the initials "IP" in a design of spindles in profile). That all interior walls of the entire house were lined with perpendicular boarding is evidenced by the projection of the window and door frames as in the principal second floor room where the boarding is still intact and is original in every respect. The principal first floor room was so lined within the memory of the Somers family. (Few examples of the entire rooms being so lined are to be found in the state. There are, however, many such wood partitions—some later plastered on one or both sides). It is probable that the east second floor room was plastered at a very early date including its side of the board partition.

In determining the original colors used, the paint was carefully removed layer by layer from the woodwork. On the exterior was found at least two coats of indeterminate white, one coat of bright green and finally an original coat of brickish red. That this red paint had been applied before "1788" was carved in the front window sill, as described in the last paragraph, seems evident by the lack of any red paint in the depressions of this and other carvings in the door and window frames. Fragments of both green and white pigments were found in these depressions. It follows that the stone annex was erected before that date (1788) as the window frames had received the same sequence of colors. Upon the removal of plaster from the partition wall between the front and rear buildings it was noted that the exterior of the mansion window frames were unpainted and not materially weather-worn. This additional evidence would seem to substantiate the antiquity of the annex. The two-story frame superstructure, which was removed, showed no trace of either green or red paint and was unquestionably a replacement of a former structure. The inside of the mansion was, for the most part, originally unpainted. The only color determined to be of early date was blue, which has been used in painting some of the interior woodwork. The other colors in the restoration are those common to the period. (The corner cupboard now in the principal room on the second floor had received a coat of dark red stain or paint followed by a coat of blue).

NOTE: An excellent example of the use of color in early domestic American architecture is in the Dey Mansion at Preakness, Passaic County, New Jersey.

The date of erection of Somers Mansion, as determined from a consideration of its design and materials—such as brick, mortar, nails, H hinges, H & L hinges, (both pointed and square), strap hinges and mouldings (and their use) is one between 1700 and 1730. However, its unique gambrel roof and two stories show it to be unrelated architecturally

to those much more steeply sloped one-story brick houses of the same period of erection in Salem and Cumberland Counties, although the use of flemish-bond brickwork is common to all.

These names and initials were carved in the outside of a window sill on the first floor: "I Hayes", "T P Cope 1788". On one of the second floor sills and on a door lintel appear "N Lewis 1793", and "C Wiltberger 1790" indicating some of the long-forgotten guests in this venerable homestead of the Family of Somers of Great Egg Harbor in the Province of West New Jersey.

H. N. M.



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